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TAGS: [EPET](#) [ENRG](#) [ECON](#) [IAEA](#) [QA](#)  
SUBJECT: GCC NUCLEAR RESEARCH TRAINING CENTER STILL SEVERAL  
YEARS AWAY

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(C) KEY POINTS  
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-- In coordination with the IAEA and the Qatari Ministry of Environment, the GCC held a three-day workshop on 28-30 September in Doha to discuss the possibility of developing a Regional Nuclear Training Center.

-- The GCC representatives listened to a series of presentations from a number of experts in the nuclear field before providing (with the exception of Bahrain and the UAE) their own goals and vision for nuclear power.

-- At the end of the workshop, the GCC representative informed the gathered experts that the GCC was sitting on a draft strategic plan for the center. This came as a surprise to the experts. All participants agreed that discussion of the details should wait until sometime after the GCC fully approves the draft.

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(C) COMMENTS  
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-- The workshop stated goal was to discuss, assess, and agree upon next steps to develop a nuclear training center in the GCC region. However, given the varying needs, desires, capabilities and political views of the various GCC countries, it will likely be a while before a training center is established. In the short term, it is likely that each country will pursue its own nuclear ambitions independently.

-- It appeared that some of the GCC countries, Kuwait and Bahrain in particular, did not understand the intent of the workshop, especially the importance of having a specific reason/justification for nuclear power.

End Key Points and Comments.

[¶1.](#) (SBU) Embassy officers attended the September 28-30 Doha workshop jointly coordinated by the IAEA, GCC and the Qatari Ministry of Environment to discuss the possibility of establishing a Regional Nuclear Training Center in the GCC region. All six GCC countries had representatives in attendance. A number of nuclear experts from Europe and the United States also attended. IAEA representative Danas Ridikas opened the workshop.

[¶2.](#) (C) Following initial introductions, a number of experts invited by the IAEA made a series of presentations on nuclear-related topics. The stated purpose of the presentations was to help the GCC to prepare and formulate a plan for developing a training center. The experts talked about how to initiate work on nuclear power, the importance of training and education, the case for accelerators, and the need for research reactors. The speakers included the Institute Manager for Advanced Nuclear Systems in Belgium, Dr. Hamid Ait Abderrahim; Business Development Manager for

the French company Areva, Maurice Vallin; and Dr. Steve Reese, the Director of the Radiation Center at Oregon State University. While each presentation and presenter had a different focus, the overarching theme was that GCC countries must articulate a justified need for nuclear power before moving forward. Further, during side conversations the experts expressed their unanimous belief that a GCC regional nuclear training center is at least 8 years away. They also all stressed the importance of close cooperation with the IAEA and the need for the western powers - not Russia and China - to provide the required expertise and training in the nuclear field.

¶13. (C) On the second day of the workshop, each country provided a short presentation on its plan/need for nuclear power. Dr. Ilham al-Qaradawi, a professor of physics at Qatar University, gave Qatar's presentation. Dr. Qaradawi explained that while Qatar has not completely ruled out nuclear energy, it is focusing its efforts on medical applications, such as radiography. She described the efforts undertaken at Sidra Medical Center and at Texas A&M's Qatar Branch. She highlighted her work on getting a memorandum of understanding signed between Texas A&M and GOQ, which is needed before moving forward.

¶14. (C) Dr. Ahmad Dhofar al-Rawas, the workshop's chairman and professor of physics at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman, gave Oman's presentation. During his short talk, Dr. Rawas emphasized Oman's need for alternative energy sources, noting that Oman recently began importing coal. He did not provide a specific plan for nuclear energy, indicating that Oman is still in the first stages of considering any nuclear

development. The Kuwaiti presentation was very disorganized, and while it made clear that Kuwait plans to explore the possibility of establishing a nuclear power plant, it failed to adequately explain why Kuwait needs one. This lack of justification provoked several questions from the experts and IAEA representative, prompting the head of the Kuwaiti delegation to explain that the GOK had recently formed a five-person committee, of which he is a member, to explore the nuclear option, but that nothing had yet been agreed upon. He hoped to come better prepared to the next workshop.

¶15. (C) Dr. Khalid al-Issa, the Director of Saudi Arabia's Atomic Energy Research Institute (AERI), gave the Saudi presentation. He provided a basic overview of AERI's work and efforts to advance nuclear medicine and energy in the Kingdom. It was clear that Saudi Arabia is the most advanced of all GCC nations, and best prepared to house a training center. During a side conversation, Pol/Econ Officer Petty learned that Issa is exploring the possibility of sending a number of Saudi students to Oregon State University to study advanced nuclear science. As for Bahrain and the UAE, neither gave a presentation, citing a lack of preparedness. The Bahraini delegation also said its government had instructed representatives merely to observe.

¶16. (C) On the final day of the workshop, Dr. Mohamad H. al-Qubaisi, the GCC's main representative, revealed that the GCC was sitting on a draft strategic plan for the center, which came as a surprise to the experts, who were told that the purpose of the workshop was to work out the details for the center. Following the revelation, all in attendance agreed to hold off on discussing the details of establishing a center until the GCC main body approves the draft. Finally, two additional workshops scheduled for later this year have been postponed until 2010 due to lack of funding.